

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7743

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 36243

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CA FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH ACTIVITIES IN QUEBEC

REF: (A) QUEBEC 368; (B) PARIS 34346

SUMMARY: WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND GENERAL DEGAULLE, GOF HAS LOST INTEREST IN FOSTERING QUEBEC SEPARATISM. THE MAIN REASON IS THAT FRANCE COULD ILL AFFORD ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL COSTS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR AN INDEPENDENT QUEBEC. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION WHICH WOULD CONFIRM OR DENY REFTEL (A) REPORTS ABOUT ACTIVITIES IN QUEBEC OF XAVIER DENIAU AND PHILLIPE ROSSILLON. DENIAU IS WELL KNOWN TO THE EMBASSY AS A GAULLIST DEPUTY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHO ALSO PRESIDES OVER THE PRIME MINISTER'S COMMISSION FOR THE FRENCH LANGUAGE. EMBASSY HAS HAD NO KNOWN CONTACTS WITH ROSSILLON, WHO APPEARS TO BE EITHER AN EMPLOYEE OF OR ASSOCIATED WITH THE COMMISSION FOR THE FRENCH LANGUAGE.

2. ALTHOUGH PERCEPTIONS REPORTED REFTEL (A) ARE OBVIOUSLY STRONGLY FELT, AND DEGAULLE'S 1967 CALL FOR A "FREE QUEBEC" STILL KINDLES SOME EMOTION HERE, EMBASSY BELIEVES FRENCH GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE QUEBEC

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PROBLEM HAS EVOLVED CONSIDERABLY UNDER PRESIDENT GIS-

CARD D'ESTAING. THE MAIN CONCERN IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES IN FRANCE TODAY IS NO LONGER THAT FRENCH-SPEAKING PEOPLES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ASSERT THEIR OWN POLITICAL IDENTITIES, BUT THAT FRANCE SHOULD NOT BE SADDLED WITH EMOTIONAL DEMANDS FOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE NAME OF FRANCOPHONE SOLIDARITY. HENCE, THE GOF IS BEING VERY CIRCUMSPECT ABOUT SHOWING ANY SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA OF QUEBEC SEPARATISM.

3. A FRENCH DIPLOMAT ON THE PRESIDENT'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STAFF TOLD US A FEW DAYS AGO THAT QUEBEC DEVELOPMENTS ARE FOLLOWED VERY CLOSELY AT THE ELYSEE PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO AVOID GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT FRANCE EITHER SUPPORTS OR IS EVEN INTERESTED IN FOSTERING A HIGHER DEGREE OF QUEBEC SEPARATISM. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT PRIME MINISTER BARRE'S TELEGRAM OF CONGRATULATIONS TO LEVESQUE EMPHASIZED THE CONTINUATION OF THE SAME DEGREE OF FRANCO-QUEBEC COOPERATION AS IN THE PAST. BOTH THE PRESIDENCY AND FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS IN CONVERSATIONS WITH US STRESS THE GOF'S DESIRE TO AVOID THE TYPE OF ACTION WHICH WOULD STIMULATE THOSE ROMANTICISTS OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT INTO APPLYING PRESSURE FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT TO A SEPARATIST QUEBEC WHICH FRANCE DOES NOT WANT AND CANNOT AFFORD. IF OUR INFORMANTS ARE SINCERE, WE CONCLUDE SUCH POLICY WOULD BE INCOMPATIBLE WITH ALL TYPES OF ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO PROMOTE BOTH QUEBEC SEPARATISM ON THE ONE HAND AND QUEBEC-US HOSTILITY ON THE OTHER.

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